CHAPTER VIII

IN the autumn of 1867 my family went to Wiesbaden, where my wife was to spend some time on account of her health, and I purposed to join them there about Christmas time for a few weeks. Great changes had taken place in Germany since that dark December night in 1861 when I rushed through the country from the Belgian frontier to Hamburg on my way from Spain to America. The period of stupid reaction after the collapse of the revolutionary movements of 1848 was over. King Frederick William IV. of Prussia, who had been so deeply convinced and arduous an upholder of the divine right of kings, had died a helpless lunatic. King William I, his brother and successor, also a believer in that divine right, but not to the extent of believing as well in the divine inspiration of kings—in other words, a man of good sense and capable of recognizing the superior ability of others,—had found in Bismarck a minister of commanding genius. The sweeping victory of Prussia over Austria in 1866 had resulted in the establishment of the North-German Confederacy under Prussian hegemony, which was considered as a stepping-stone to the unification of all Germany as a constitutional empire.

Several revolutionists of 1848 now sat in the Reichstag of the North-German Confederacy, and one of the ablest of them, Lothar Bucher, was Bismarck's confidential counsellor. The nation was elated with hope and there was a

liberal wind Wowing even in the sphere of the government. I did not doubt that under these circumstances I might venture into Germany without danger of being seriously molested, yet as my per-